

read my article. I didn't blame the ADA for becoming alarmed by the VFW Post's stupid and alarming recruiting publicity. I merely reported local opinion, with which I found myself agreeing, that before squaring off at the VFW in print it might have been well to appeal to the local VFW officers to correct the impression, which their publicity unquestionably conveyed, that they were engaging in activities for which "witch hunt" is the appropriate word, although the VFW doesn't believe in witch hunting and Admiral Lovette assures me that no VFW post has ever practiced it—not even in Norwalk.

Maybe the ADA aborted a spy hunt, but I strongly doubt it. I also doubt that it is sound liberalism to assume that all veterans are congenital witch hunters, impossible to talk to, merely because an occasional post elects a blabber-mouth as commander. Some of my best friends are veterans; in fact I'm one myself, and come to think of it, Mr. Gaines probably is too.

Did Stalin Represent Progress?

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his review of Isaac Deutscher's *Russia, What Next?* (January), Mr. Paul Willen asks: "How could one man be so right and so wrong at the same time?" After reading the review, I am impelled to paraphrase his question—to wit: How could one reviewer be so right and so wrong at the same time?

Mr. Willen regards Deutscher as "one of the very few contemporary analysts of Soviet civilization who have seen the post-Stalin 'convulsions' in the perspective of the general historical development of Soviet Communism, rather than as intra-mural Kremlin intrigue." He may be right about it; perhaps Deutscher is to be credited for at least *trying* to interpret recent Soviet policies from a socio-economic point of view rather than reporting excitedly on the number of Malenkov's portraits currently displayed in Moscow. But Mr. Willen also credits Deutscher with "perspicuity"; and while in the second part of this review he performs a brilliant *tour de force* in examining Deutscher's psychological affinity with Stalinism, he nevertheless maintains that the latter's analysis of "the historical roots of the present crisis of Stalinism" is basically correct.

A careful reading of *Russia, What Next?* will easily disprove Mr. Willen's claim. For it is precisely "the early portions of the book" that illustrate—more glaringly, crudely, and compactly than his massive biography of Stalin—Deutscher's basic approach, namely, a rigid determinism which views history as the working

out of inexorable economic forces, and which, in this instance, leads to a dispassionate justification of the Stalinist system. This attitude has much in common with that of Trotsky; indeed, it is rather amusing to note the striking similarity between the ideas of *Russia, What Next?* and those, say, of *The Revolution Betrayed*. Trotsky staunchly defended the Soviet Union on the ground that its economy was "socialist"; he was convinced that Stalinism represented but a passing phase, a "transition from capitalism to socialism." So does Deutscher hold that Stalinism established "the framework for a socialist society." But whereas Trotsky maintained that Stalinism could have been averted, Deutscher states unequivocally that it could not. The "Stalin epoch" was barbarous yet inevitable and necessary; above all, it was "one of unprecedented economic and social progress." Having served a useful function, having caused the people of Russia "to come of age politically and culturally," it has now become anachronistic and must therefore vanish from the historical arena. There is an organic unity between the first part of Deutscher's book, which Mr. Willen praises, and the second, which he assails: for it is his analysis of "the historical roots of the present crisis of Stalinism" that leads Deutscher to conclude that "the balance of domestic factors favors a democratic regeneration of the regime."

A FEW examples must suffice to demonstrate Deutscher's glib defense of Stalinism in the name of "historical necessity." On pp. 24-25, Deutscher represents Lenin's terror-system as having been directed simply against "those who strove, arms in hand, to restore the pre-revolutionary order." As for the socialist parties on the right, they "forfeited most or nearly all of their support among the working classes." Apparently sharing Lenin's disdain for the "petty-bourgeois" peasantry, Deutscher neglects to take into account the formidable strength of the Social Revolutionaries, who drew nearly two-thirds of all the votes cast in the elections to the Constituent Assembly which met on January 18, 1918, and was dissolved by the Bolsheviks the following day. Deutscher's acceptance of the "necessity" of forced industrialization—in fact, his infatuation with it—automatically rules out any consideration of other alternatives that presented themselves to the Soviet leadership in the 1920's; nor does he pause to wonder whether the industrial and military progress achieved under Stalin was worth the enormous cost in human pain and suffering. It is therefore not surprising to find him justifying Stalinist inequality—"it was in the national interest that the government should foster a privileged minority consisting of administrators, planners,

engineers, and skilled workers" (p. 127); and terror—"the government had identified itself with a great national cause. . . . This identification, in the last instance [!], accounted for the helplessness of the Soviet people against the terror" (p. 123); or evincing an uncanny insight into the deeper recesses of Stalin's mind: "During a quarter of a century Stalinism, without compunction or pity, *and yet with some suppressed compassion*, drove a nation of 160 to 200 millions to jump the chasm which separated the epoch of the wooden plow from that of the atomic pile" (p. 89—italics mine). Since Stalinism, despite its iniquities, spells progress, it follows that the Soviet working class, in spite of its having been "severely regimented, disciplined, and directed," is "essentially a normal working class" (p. 72). It follows, too, that "the bulk of the peasantry has somehow adjusted itself to the collectivist framework of its existence" (p. 78), and that it most probably is not "hankering to return to small-scale private farming" (p. 84)—all evidence to the contrary notwithstanding.

DEUTSCHER depicts Stalinism as a unique blend of Marxism, Greek Orthodoxy, and—quintessentially—"primitive magic," i.e., the expression of "man's helplessness amid the forces of nature he had not yet learned to control" (p. 56). More concretely, Stalin is shown as a product of his native Georgia, its "tribal way of life . . . its totems and taboos" (p. 57). . . . "The fear instilled in Soviet citizens of contamination by contact with the West has been in its violence and irrationality reminiscent of the taboo—it suggests the savage dread of incest" (p. 61). . . . Despite this primitivism, however—or, more accurately, *because* of it, Stalin was able to "drive" the nation towards "socialism"; and having succeeded, having accomplished "unprecedented economic and social progress," it is now compelled to shed its savage mantle. For "how," Deutscher reflects, "could the primitive magic of Stalinism 'coexist' with modern knowledge and Marxist theories in the minds of millions?" (p. 135). The answer to this delightfully "loaded" question is, of course: it cannot. In fact, so convinced is Deutscher of the historical incongruity of Stalinism, that he accepts the Soviet amnesty and promise to revise the criminal code at face value—though the evidence argues against so optimistic an evaluation (p. 172). And so eager is he to interpret some of the more dramatic reversals that followed Stalin's death in the light of his theories, that he actually falsifies history by asserting that the repudiation of the so-called "doctors' plot" constituted the first public exposure of forced confessions. Whatever the real meaning of this

reversal, it is difficult to believe that Deutscher is unaware of the several trials, held in 1939 and widely reported in the Soviet as well as world press, in which officials of the NKVD were accused of having extorted false confessions of "counter-revolutionary" and "fascist" activity from innocent Soviet citizens, some of them under the age of fourteen. . . .

Time alone will tell whether Deutscher's predictions are—as Mr. Willen thinks, and I heartily agree—so much "wishful thinking," or essentially correct. . . . But there is little doubt that the "early portions" of *Russia, What Next?* far from revealing "perspicuity," constitute the most refined apologia for Stalinist totalitarianism.

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Psychoanalysis and Faith

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

It is unfortunate that Lillian Blumberg McCall chose to use her review of Dr. C. P. Oberndorf's *History of Psychoanalysis in America* (April) as an occasion for petty self-pleading and captious criticism of psychoanalysis in general. In projecting her personal dissatisfaction with the results of psychoanalysis onto "anyone who has ever been analyzed" she reveals her bankruptcy as a serious critic.

Every psychoanalyst knows, and will unhesitatingly state, that there are many patients who like Mrs. McCall terminate analysis with the feeling of being "the same old you." But every analyst and every analytically-oriented psychiatrist can point to many others who have emerged with quite different feelings, and whose change from "the old you" can be attested to not only by themselves but by those around them. That there are not more such is unfortunate, and indicates the existence of unresolved theoretical and practical problems. These problems will not be solved by imputations to analysts—medical analysts, of course—of motives of greed, dishonesty, and opportunism.

In her orthodox unorthodoxy Mrs. McCall casually dismisses certain technical rules of psychoanalysis as "matters of custom." It does not seem to have occurred to her that the value of these "matters of custom" may have been repeatedly verified by empirical means, or that in cavalierly discarding them the "non-orthodox schools" may have thrown out the baby with the bath. The distinction between flexibility and doctrinaire anti-Freudianism seems to have escaped her.

Mrs. McCall is, of course, correct in her frivolous observation that there is no present